

January 20, 2016

March of Dimes Foundation

Shalae Harris
Interim State Director
Program & Government Affairs

Greater Kansas Chapter
4400 College Blvd., Suite 180
Overland Park, KS 66211
Telephone 913.235.9846
Fax 913.469.3661
sharris@marchofdimes.org

To: Kansas House Health and Human Services Committee
Representative Dan Hawkins, Chair

From: Shalae Harris, RN, BSN, MPA
Interim State Director Program & Government Affairs
March of Dimes Greater Kansas Chapter

Re: House Bill 2324 – Newell Stillbirth Research and Dignity Act

I write on behalf of the March of Dimes in support of HB 2324 which will bring enhanced data collection and grief and bereavement services to families who have had a stillbirth. The mission of the March of Dimes is to improve the health of women of childbearing age, infants, and children by preventing birth defects, premature birth, and infant mortality.

One of the basic indicators of the health of a community or state is infant mortality, the death of an infant before one year of age. There were 39,193 Kansas births in 2014 with the infant mortality rate at 6.3 per 1,000 live births and a stillbirth rate of 5.1. The leading causes of infant mortality are birth defects, prematurity/low birth weight, and sudden unexplained infant death. The causes of stillbirths are not as well documented as those of infant deaths. The American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommends an increase in the percentages of placental evaluations and autopsies to be performed for stillbirths, which is a baby that has died in utero over 20 weeks gestation. This bill will bring more comprehensive data collection to serve as effective documentation in the study of the causes of stillbirths in our state.

Across the nation and in Kansas there are Fetal Infant Mortality Review (FIMR) boards in our highest infant mortality areas. FIMR is a quality improvement model to help communities improve the services and resources to families who may suffer an infant death or stillbirth. After chart abstraction of the infant death, a case review team of physicians, nurses, and public health advocates make recommendations based on the de-identified clinical findings and data from the review to make changes for better birth outcomes for the community. HB 2324 would help further their work in our highest and most burden areas of the state for this issue.

While we are trying to find the reasons, we still do not know all of the causes leading to stillbirths. We do know that it is everyone's hope that their pregnancy will go to full term delivering a healthy baby. This is not always the case. Stillbirth is a shocking and sentinel event in the life of a family. Families are left stunned and numb at such an outcome. Therefore, we encourage enhanced grief and bereavement resources and training of labor and delivery staffs to cope with such an event. We know sensitive, timely, and thorough counseling is important to the mental health of the mother and family for their future and possible subsequent pregnancies.

On behalf of the pregnant women and babies we work to protect, the March of Dimes urges the committee to support HB 2324. Please help us bring all Kansas babies to their first birthday! Thank you for all that you do to support the health of Kansas residents.

Sincerely,

Shalae Harris, March of Dimes Greater Kansas Chapter

For more information or questions, contact Shalae Harris, Interim State Director Program & Government Affairs, 913.235.9846 or sharris@marchofdimes.org